



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

January 3, 2020

The Honorable Jenniffer González-Colón
U.S. House of Representatives
House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman González-Colón:

Thank you for your letter regarding the implementation of the Lifeline Program's National Eligibility Verifier. I am committed to bridging the digital divide, and I believe that the Lifeline program can help do just that. I also believe that implementing the National Verifier nationwide will help root out waste, fraud, and abuse in the Lifeline program.

While the FCC did not receive a formal waiver request regarding the National Verifier launch in Puerto Rico, in preparing for that launch FCC staff in the Wireline Competition Bureau worked closely with members of the Puerto Rico Telecommunications Board (PRTB) and carriers in the territory to understand their concerns and answer their questions. In particular, in the days leading up to the October 11, 2019 soft launch in Puerto Rico, FCC staff discussed the launch process in detail with representatives of the PRTB and heard their concerns about the National Verifier and its impact on low-income consumers in Puerto Rico. FCC staff explained that, during the soft launch period, the National Verifier's service provider portal will be open for Lifeline providers to test their systems with the National Verifier but that Lifeline providers may continue using their existing eligibility determinations processes if they so choose until the FCC announces the full launch.

During those conversations, members of the PRTB asked that the National Verifier (1) establish an electronic interface, known as an application programming interface (API), to enable Lifeline providers to more easily connect their systems with those of the National Verifier; and (2) establish a connection with Programa de Asistencia Nutricional (PAN) to automatically verify the eligibility Lifeline applicants who also participate in that program. The PRTB members also expressed concern about the impact of naming and addressing conventions in Puerto Rico on the qualification process for Lifeline applicants in the territory. FCC staff explained that they were working with the Lifeline Administrator, the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), on each of these issues and PRTB representatives expressed support for moving forward with a soft launch of the National Verifier on October 11, 2019.

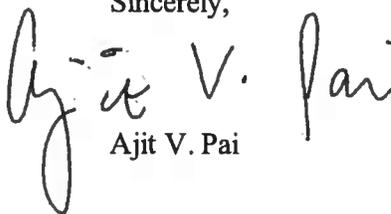
Since then, FCC staff has made substantial progress on the issues raised by the PRTB and the National Verifier has improved automated eligibility verification for the Lifeline program in Puerto Rico. First, on December 10, 2019, the National Verifier launched an API allowing Lifeline providers to directly submit applicant information to the National Verifier to receive an eligibility result, thereby streamlining the enrollment process for consumers. Second, FCC staff

has continued its work with the Puerto Rico Department of the Family to achieve a connection to automatically verify the eligibility of Lifeline applicants who also participate in the Programa de Asistencia Nutricional (PAN) program. In particular, the Puerto Rico agency responsible for PAN has recently entered into an agreement with USAC to conduct the technical work needed to establish this connection. Third, FCC staff has been working with USAC to ensure that the National Verifier has the appropriate matching criteria for automated eligibility verification in Puerto Rico, in light of unique naming and address conventions in the territory.

During the soft launch, FCC staff will continue to closely monitor progress on these issues before announcing the date for the hard launch of the National Verifier in Puerto Rico.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A" and a long tail on the "i".

Ajit V. Pai